

**Charles University Prague**  
**Faculty of Social Sciences**  
**Institute of Political Studies**

# **The Politics and Policies of the Catholic Church in Social Revolution**

**MASTER'S DISSERTATION**

author: **Shannon Balthazor**  
master's degree program: **IEPS**  
academic year: **2007/2008**  
advising professor: **PhDr. Petr Kratochvil**  
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**DECLARATION:**

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work, based on the sources and literature listed in the appended bibliography.

The thesis as submitted is 131,075 keystrokes long (including spaces), i.e. 74 manuscript pages.

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# The Politics and Policies of the Catholic Church in Social Revolution

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## Abstract

For many centuries the Catholic Church has been an influential contributor to social policy and a political force in Central Europe and in Latin America. It has been a shaping power in both regions and has endured through many changes in governments. Some of the reasons why the Catholic Church has managed to endure in these regions have been because it has made political choices with regard to the ruling powers throughout the years and also has worked to become a valuable social institution to the people living in the regions.

The middle of the twentieth century brought with it major political and social changes, both in the regions discussed and inside the Catholic Church itself. The Church at this point in time is not longer the builder of nations it was in past centuries and instead pursued a more non-interventionist policy toward politics. The Church chose to pursue policies that limit political involvement and place renewed focus on spiritual and humanitarian matters the questions this paper seeks to answer are: What exactly are these new policies in the twentieth century and how has the Church implemented them? Has the Catholic Church been able to apply these new policies consistently to the situations in Central Europe and Latin America? Has it been biased by preferring democratic governments or democratic resistance movements to other types of governments and becoming involved to support them accordingly?

This work analyzes the role that the Catholic Church had in social and political revolutions in selected countries and discusses the policies both official and implied that the Church pursues. Four case studies are presented for analysis: Brazil, Nicaragua, the Slovakian part of Czechoslovakia<sup>1</sup> and Poland. These countries were chosen because the Catholic Church has had large roles in the Politics and development of all four countries. All examined countries have similar situations in that there is an active resistance movement taking place that is in some way supported by members of the Catholic Church. Also these movements wer happening within roughly the same 25 year time frame. The focus of this study will be an evaluation of Church policy between the years 1964-1991 with a brief history of each country/region and the political and social situation in which analysis will be applied.

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<sup>1</sup> From this point forward it shall be referred to as simply "Slovakia" in the interest of clarity and simplicity.

## **1.0 Introduction**

The Catholic Church has been an important player in international politics for centuries and it is undeniable that the Church remains an influential force in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. However over the centuries the nature of politics has changed and so has society. Accordingly the Catholic Church has also changed, and so did the nature of its involvement strategies in politics, redefining the parameters in which clergy and the members of the Church could act in politics. This does not change the fact that the teachings and policies of the Catholic Church penetrate several layers of politics and society, from grassroots movements through to national governments and international organizations. This impact is unlike any other organization in the world owing to the fact the its members extend from across all strata of society and its leader is perhaps the most influential man in the world.

This dissertation will focus on two regions that the Church has had particular influence in: Latin America and Eastern Europe. Two countries were chosen from each region in which to analyze the Church's actions and influences. This paper will examine the political events that have occurred in these four places between the years 1964-1991 and the role and reaction of the Catholic Church.

The goals of this paper are to isolate what the Catholic Church's official policies regarding the involvement of the Church in politics and political/social movements are, to explore whether the hierarchy applies the defined policies consistently regardless of whether the political movement is one that the Church does not support, or if it is more lenient in its policies to democratic resistance movements and democratic governments. The paper also examine how the Church's policies of political non-involvement are applied in the case of rightist autocracy and democratic

resistance movements. To answer these questions an analysis will be made based on the findings of what the church's role in social revolution been and what the reaction of the hierarchy was.

The beginning section of this paper will establish the platform of the Church by reviewing several of the most important and relevant documents concerning the interaction of the Church and Politics and social movements. Some of the documents presented are relevant to the general audience, while others only to the specific regions discussed. Several of these documents were written in regard to social justice and not in particular to political movements, however because of the nature of the repressive political situations that all of the countries studied are in they are relevant in interpreting the political movements that are based on trying to bring about social justice. All are in some way relevant either defining or reinforcing the Church's social or political stance.

The countries chosen for comparison in this piece are: Poland, Nicaragua, Brazil and Czechoslovakia (though this paper will only focus on the Slovak region).<sup>2</sup> The countries were chosen because they all share a similar Catholic identity, that is, not only is the majority of the population in these countries Catholic by religion, but also to some extent in culture. Poland and Slovakia in particular share a particularly strong Catholic identity, where Catholicism is linked to national identity. Slovakia, though not a country at the time, will be analyzed alone instead of using the whole country of Czechoslovakia because the Slovaks hold strong link to identity in the Catholic Church which differentiated them from their famously atheist Czech brothers. Also Slovakia will be discussed alone because of most of the Catholic involvement in politics was in

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<sup>2</sup> From this point the Slovak region of Czechoslovakia will simply be referred to as Slovakia in the interest of simplicity and clarity.

Slovakia and not in the Czech region of Czechoslovakia. Both Poland and Slovakia were chosen because they were the two districts in the Eastern Bloc that had the strongest Catholic identity and were also the countries with the most active resistance.

Brazil and Nicaragua also share a Catholic identity but in a different way than that of Poland and Slovakia. Although most of Latin America is Catholic, Catholicism does not define nationality, and because state and nation are not necessarily connected as they are in Europe. While Slovakia and Poland's Catholic churches remained at grounds roots level Catholicism to the laity the Latin American Catholic Church was on the cutting edge of progress.

The second reason that these countries were chosen is that all four countries were experiencing political and social unrest within a very similar time frame: between the years of 1964-1990. This timeline is also a very functional in this study as it is roughly the same time that the church was in transition through the council of Vatican II which was held from 1962-1965. Also notable is that during this time frame all four countries possessed very influential bishops that were involved deeply in the politics of their respective countries.

Also notable is that all of the countries and regions that will be discussed are regions that have had a considerable amount of literature regarding the interaction of Church and State written about them allowing for

A brief history of Church-State interaction in the regions and countries will be given along with a breakdown of the Catholic Church's involvement in the political and social movements in the relevant time frame. It will explore the involvement of the Catholic Church at both the grassroots and upper level of Church and State.

After this the response of the hierarchy to these movements will be examined analyzing whether the involvement was condoned or restricted and what methods were used to bring lower levels of the Church in line with the position of the Holy See.

## **2.0 Statements and Documents of the Catholic Church regarding the interaction of Church and State**

This section will attempt to define the official stance of the Catholic Church, that of the Hierarchy, by using publicly released official documents including those written at Vatican II, The Code of Canon Law, letters released by the Vatican and several encyclicals issued by various popes known as the social encyclicals.

It might be expected that the Catholic Church had a universal political policy upon which it bases action towards situations that arise in countries where its clergy and its followers are politically active. However this is not the case at all, there have been changes and shifts in thinking and approach as Popes and bishops change. It appears that instead of issuing one over arching statement or doctrine the Church instead tackles issues in digestible pieces on a case by case basis usually through the use of encyclicals<sup>3</sup> but also through other documents such as apostolic letters.

The Holy See has released several encyclicals between the years 1891-1991 that are particularly relevant to the topics in this dissertation known as the "Social Encyclicals". This is a series of encyclicals that specifically address the situation of poverty and repression as a result of growing industrialization throughout the

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<sup>3</sup> Encyclicals are letters that the Pope writes and addresses to specific audiences These audiences can be as wide as to include all members of the church around the world or as narrow as to address the bishops in only a specific part of the world. Other documents that are relevant and have had a large impact upon the nature and philosophy of the church in both the hierarchy all the ways through to the laity are the documents of Vatican II.

world; they also address the different approaches and philosophies that have come into being as a result of the ever-widening gap between classes. It is upon these encyclicals that much of the policy in regard to the social and political situations in Latin America and Eastern Europe has been based upon. Four documents will be offered for discussion: *Rerum Novarum*, *Laborem Exercens*, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* and *Centesimus Annus* all of which have particular relevance to our subject.

A few other documents including the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the 1983 Code of Canon Law and Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* will also be addressed. All of which address different aspect of social teaching and also the role of the Church within social movements.

## **2.1 Encyclical: *Rerum Novarum* 1891**

The first and most important of these social encyclicals, published in 1891 by Pope Leo XIII, was *Rerum Novarum*<sup>4</sup> it is upon this encyclical that the bulk of Catholic Social Teaching is based. This document shows considerable insight into world politics and the social situation. At the time it was published there were no strong socialist states to direct it at; rather this letter appears to come as a sort of warning for the future. This letter comments upon capital and labor as a papal response to the rapidly industrializing world and the social ills and inequalities that resulted from this progress, with particular attention to the plight of the working class. It is upon this encyclical that the ensuing social encyclicals were based and it is upon these documents which the church responds to the problem of social ills as a result of political

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<sup>4</sup> Translation: Of new things

and industrial woes. This encyclical manages to carve out a middle path between unrestricted capitalism and socialism recognizing that "to exercise pressure upon the indigent and the destitute for the sake of gain, and to gather one's profit out of the need of another, is condemned by all laws, human and divine" (Leo XIII, 1891) while maintaining that socialism is not a reasonable alternative because "it is clear that the main tenet of socialism, community of goods, must be utterly rejected, since it only injures those whom it would seem meant to benefit, is directly contrary to the natural rights of mankind, and would introduce confusion and disorder into the commonwealth" (Leo XIII, 1891).

Pope Leo XIII condemns a socialistic society in which there is no private property, it makes it clear that "The right to possess private property is derived from nature, not from man; and the State has the right to control its use in the interests of the public good alone, but by no means to absorb it altogether" (Leo XIII, 1891) . It also goes as far as to condemn the over-involvement of the state in the family, "the "society" of a man's house -- a society very small, one must admit, but none the less a true society, and one older than any State" (Leo XIII, 1891) and warns that the family is a unit that is better left to the stewardship of the head of the household and not the state because the family "has rights and duties peculiar to itself which are quite independent of the State." (Leo XIII, 1891). Furthermore it can be observed that beyond condemning the general tenants of socialism, such as community goods, this pope also goes so far as to condemn one of the main tenants of Marxism, specifically class struggle. Leo XIII not only denounces the concept of class struggle as irrational but advocates the cooperation of the classes with the Church functioning as a mediator between the classes as seen in from the following excerpt:



"The great mistake made in regard to the matter now under consideration is to take up with the notion that class is naturally hostile to class, and that the wealthy and the working men are intended by nature to live in mutual conflict. So irrational and so false is this view that the direct contrary is the truth. Just as the symmetry of the human frame is the result of the suitable arrangement of the different parts of the body, so in a State is it ordained by nature that these two classes should dwell in harmony and agreement, so as to maintain the balance of the body politics. Each needs the other: capital cannot do without labor, nor labor without capital. Mutual agreement results in the beauty of good order, while perpetual conflict necessarily produces confusion and savage barbarity. Now, in preventing such strife as this, and in uprooting it, the efficacy of Christian institutions is marvelous and manifold. First of all, there is no intermediary more powerful than religion (whereof the Church is the interpreter and guardian) in drawing the rich and the working class together, by reminding each of its duties to the other, and especially of the obligations of justice." (Leo XIII)

It can be said, however, that not all socialist concepts are lost on the church, as this was a document that advocated social responsibility of the owner of capital and of the state, it was one of the first documents that endorsed what we have come to know as a "living wage" though the specific term "living wage" was not used it is clear from the statement "that wages ought not to be insufficient to support a frugal and well behaved wage-earner" (Leo XIII) that this is the same concept. Furthermore this document cements the Church's firm support of labor's right to form trade unions to protect their interests and maintain this living wage observing that "When work people have recourse to a strike and become voluntarily idle, it is frequently because the hours of labor are too long, or the work



too hard, or because they consider their wages insufficient" (Leo XIII).

It is also important to note that this document, as many of its successors, repeated states that man's most important priority should not be for earthly riches but for the reward of heaven. "God has not created us for the perishable and transitory things of earth, but for things heavenly and everlasting; He has given us this world as a place of exile, and not as our abiding place. As for riches and the other things which men call good and desirable, whether we have them in abundance, or are lacking in them-so far as eternal happiness is concerned - it makes no difference; the only important thing is to use them aright. Jesus Christ, when He redeemed us with plentiful redemption, took not away the pains and sorrows which in such large proportion are woven together in the web of our mortal life. He transformed them into motives of virtue and occasions of merit; and no man can hope for eternal reward unless he follow in the blood-stained footprints of his Saviour. "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him." (Leo XIII, 1891) This is a theme that is repeated by the Church in several documents as the Vatican wants to make absolutely clear that the mission statement of the Church is to bring people to salvation and all other missions are secondary to this mission. This may seem like an obvious point in a document issued from the church but its importance lies in that it reiterates that salvation cannot and should not be sacrificed for the sake of improvement of earthly conditions. This is echoed through the Church's condemnation of violence and also of violent revolution as a means in which to accomplish social reform. It is clear from the above quote that the Church accepts that in mortal life there will be some injustice and suffering that its people will have to endure and which should be endured if peaceful campaigns of change are not effective in changing oppressive situations.

## 2.2 The Documents of Vatican II

In 1962 the twenty-first ecumenical council of the Catholic Church was open under Pope John XXIII and was closed in 1965 under Pope Paul VI. This council authored what were perhaps the most influential documents that were put forth from the church in the twentieth century. This series of documents issued by the second Vatican council were an attempt to modernize the Catholic Church the council of Vatican II contained some of the most predominant and influential thinkers in the Church of the twentieth century including Pope John XXIII and future popes Karol Wojtyła (John Paul II) and Joseph Ratzinger Benedict XVI).

Many of the changes of the Second Vatican Council centered upon more deeply engaging the laity in their apostolate, as can be seen in the document *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, in which the Church dealt specifically with the apostolate of the laity. In this section the church calls for the "apostolate be broadened and intensified" and states that "God's plan for the world is that men should work together to renew and constantly perfect the temporal order" (Second Vatican Council, 1965)

This was not the only document of Vatican II that encouraged more active participation of laity, and clergy, for the common good and social justice. Through Vatican II the Church was to become much more socially involved than before and more politically active and involved in local and state politics.

"*Gaudium et Spes*" was another document that heavily encouraged social involvement of laity and clergy. This was also perhaps the most noteworthy with regard to Liberation Theology. In this Pastoral Constitution the Church addresses questions of social justice and liberty recognizing that "Never has the human race

enjoyed such an abundance of wealth, resources and economic power, and yet a huge proportion of the worlds citizens are still tormented by hunger and poverty" (Second Vatican Council, 1965) From this the Church goes on to call on man to try and alleviate social injustice and pursue the common good. "Since there are so many people prostrate with hunger in the world, this sacred council urges all, both individuals and governments, to remember the aphorism of the Fathers, "Feed the man dying of hunger, because if you have not fed him, you have killed him," (Second Vatican Council, 1965). It is because of such encouragement of social justice and that attention was directed towards the societal inequalities. Many Liberation Theologians cite this Pastoral Constitution as a founding document of Liberation Theology.

### **2.3 Apostolic Letter: Octogesima Adveniens 1971**

Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* reaffirms what was written in *Rerum Novarum*, and also condemns Marxism and liberal ideology. It goes on to add several very pertinent dimensions including the encouragement of Catholics to participate in political life. Catholics are urged to use their political actions as a way to better the community, achieve the common good and an outlet to live the gospel. In this letter Pope Paul VI calls Christians to political action towards the goals of achieving both economic and social justice.

### **2.4 Encyclical: Laborem Exercens 1981**

*Laborem Exercens*<sup>5</sup> 1981 was published on the ninetieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* and specifically addressed the question of labor. This document is the reiteration of the rights of

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<sup>5</sup> performing work

the workers and the importance of labor unions, and also a criticism of “unbridled” Capitalism in which the worker is taken advantage of and not offered safe working conditions, a fair wage or reasonable work hours.

Among the more relevant points is the acknowledgement that labor unions “are indeed a *mouthpiece for the struggle for social justice*” (John Paul II, 1981) While this is obviously in support of unions as a force in securing social justice the pope is very careful not to err on the side of socialism stating that “the role of unions is not to play politics in the sense that the expression is commonly understood today. Unions do not have the character of political parties struggling for power; they should not be subjected to the decision of political parties or have too close links with them” (John Paul II, 1981).

## **2.5 The Code of Canon Law 1983**

In 1983 Pope John Paul II issued a new Code of Canon Law, part of which addressed involvement of the clergy in politics. In prior versions of the Code clergy were not expressly forbidden to participate in politics and some priests had even held offices such as US Congressman and President of Slovakia, however in this new Code of Canon Law that was to change.

According to section 285 sentence 3 of Code of Canon law “Clerics are forbidden to assume public offices which entail a participation in the exercise of civil power.” (Codex Iuris Canonici, 1983). This meant that several priests around the world would be called to step down from political office including and especially those holding office in Latin America.

This was not the only restriction that the new code laid down in "Can. 287 §1. Most especially, clerics are always to foster the peace and harmony based on justice which are to be observed among people. §2. They are not to have an active part in political parties and in governing labor unions unless, in the judgment of competent ecclesiastical authority, the protection of the rights of the Church or the promotion of the common good requires it." (Codex Iuris Canonici, 1983). This also would have an effect on the growing political power of the Church in Eastern Europe and Latin America. Perhaps especially in Poland where the labor unions were the catalyzing force in opposition to Communism.

Furthermore the church also forbids clergy from enrolling in military service except with special permission given from Church officials "Can. 289 §1. Since military service is hardly in keeping with the clerical state, clerics and candidates for sacred orders are not to volunteer for military service except with the permission of their ordinary." (Codex Iuris Canonici, 1983) While this statement is directed towards involvement in any state militias or armies it can be used in regards to the Church's reinforcement that the clergy should not become involved in violence of any kind, and condemn priestly activity in guerilla armies of resistance.

From the promulgation of these new laws it is infinitely clear that the Church wants the clergy to have no part in politics and revolution, particularly violent revolution. This document serves to further drives an official wedge between Church and State.

## **2.6 Encyclical: Sollicitudo Rei Socialis 1987**

In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*<sup>6</sup> 1987, John Paul II developed the philosophy of "the option for the poor" which is specifically relevant to the situation of the Church in Latin America and also further expounds upon the notion of solidarity.

The option or love of preference for the poor was as John Paul II put it "an option, or a special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness. It affects the life of each Christian inasmuch as he or she seeks to imitate the life of Christ, but it applies equally to our social responsibilities and hence to our manner of living, and to the logical decisions to be made concerning the ownership and use of goods." (John Paul II, 1987)

In this encyclical John Paul II called upon his audience "to be convinced of the seriousness of the present moment and of each one's individual responsibility, and to implement - by the way they live as individuals and as families, by the use of their resources, by their civic activity, by contributing to economic and political decisions and by personal commitment to national and international undertakings - the measures inspired by solidarity and love of preference for the poor." (John Paul II, 1987).

In this encyclical he observed the encouraging signs of the solidarity of the poor and applauded their peaceful protests. "Positive signs in the contemporary world are the growing awareness of the solidarity of the poor among themselves, their efforts to support one another, and their public demonstrations on the social scene which, without recourse to violence, present their own needs and rights in the face of the inefficiency or corruption of the public authorities. By virtue of her own evangelical duty the

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<sup>6</sup> On Social Justice

Church feels called to take her stand beside the poor, to discern the justice of their requests, and to help satisfy them, without losing sight of the good of groups in the context of the common good.” (John Paul II, 1987)

## **2.7 Encyclical: Centesimus Annus 1991**

The last document considered is the encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, another key document, which was issued by Pope John Paul II, as its name “the hundredth year” indicates it was issued as for the hundredth anniversary of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. In this encyclical Pope John Paul II refers back to the *Rerum Novarum* to further address the relationship of capital and labor. It reiterated the original principles of *Rerum Novarum* and included a modernized definition of Capital. Capital in the first encyclical was namely land and property while in this new encyclical it was recognized that the meaning of the word capital had changed significantly over the course of one hundred years and now “In our time, in particular, there exists another form of ownership which is becoming no less important than land: *the possession of know-how, technology and skill*. The wealth of the industrialized nations is based much more on this kind of ownership than on natural resources.” (John Paul II, 1991).

This is perhaps the most specific to the social situations in Latin America and in former Eastern Bloc Countries as it specifically addresses Marxism, which plays a significant role in the liberation theology of Latin America and also had play a significant role in the ideology of the Eastern Bloc countries under Soviet Communism. In this document he uses the experiences of the Eastern Bloc as an example to Latin America and offers Catholic Social doctrine up as an example. He addresses “those who are searching today for a new and authentic theory and praxis of

liberation, the Church offers not only her social doctrine and, in general, her teaching about the human person redeemed in Christ, but also her concrete commitment and material assistance in the struggle against marginalization and suffering." (John Paul II, 1991) From the wording of the language he used it is clear that he is indeed addressing Liberation Theologians and their followers.

In this encyclical John Paul II holds up the example of Poland to the remaining the Eastern bloc which toppled the oppressive regime "by means of peaceful protest, using only the weapons of truth and justice. While Marxism held that only by exacerbating social conflicts was it possible to resolve them through violent confrontation" (John Paul II, 1991)

The Pope expressly promotes democracy and a free market economy as the best of all current available social systems. He again refers to the former Eastern Bloc by stating "The second factor in the crisis was certainly the inefficiency of the economic system, which is not to be considered simply as a technical problem, but rather a consequence of the violation of the human rights to private initiative, to ownership of property and to freedom in the economic sector. To this must be added the cultural and national dimension: it is not possible to understand man on the basis of economics alone, nor to define him simply on the basis of class membership." (John Paul II, 1991) Clearly this is not only a hindsight confirmation of the imminent failure of the Marxist system but it is also an endorsement for peaceful means of protest, free market economy and democracy.



### **3.0 The Case in Eastern Europe:**

#### **3.1 Brief History/ Background of the interaction of Church and State**

To better understand the Church's involvement in the twentieth century politics of Eastern Europe we must first understand the circumstances and background in which the Church and State interacted in the past. Both Poles and Slovaks have had a long tradition with the Catholic Church going back to roughly to same period of time starting in the ninth and tenth century and in the twentieth century they both shared similar circumstances in dealing with Soviet style Communism.

##### **3.1.a History of Poland**

"The Catholic Church's prominent role in contemporary Polish society is the result of three historical developments(5): the identification of church and nation through Mieszko I's baptism in 966; the association of the church with Polish nationalism during the partitions, occupations, and foreign dominations of the last two hundred years; and the creation of a nearly homogeneous nation by the murder and expulsion of Polish Jews during and after the war, and by the ethnic migrations involved in Stalin's movement of Poland's borders to the West. As a result of these developments, Poland today is a nation whose population is overwhelmingly Catholic, and whose national identity is closely associated with Roman Catholicism."

The Catholic Church's role in Poland has been highly reliant on Poland's geographic and political situation in Europe. Poland become a Catholic country as a result of the baptism of duke Meiszko I in 966, later this duke would also place Poland under the

protection of the Pope. In many ways this was a political move which placed Poland in the west, as part of Europe defining itself as the easternmost boundary of Europe before crossing into Orthodox Russia. Another decision that put Poland solidly into the realm of Western Europe and the Catholic Church was the choice of a Latin alphabet over a Cyrillic alphabet. In addition a treaty with the Holy Roman Emperor Otto I cemented its place in the Church. From the very beginning it could be said that Poland's choice of involvement with Catholic Europe was a political move, designed to bind Poland to the west and at the same time prevent German invasion which had already begun at the time. (Byrnes, 1996)

Later on, Poland would endure several subsequent occupations by invading powers and because of this, Catholicism became more important to the culture of Poland. For the Polish people defining themselves as Catholic became synonymous as defining themselves as Polish in contrast to the Orthodox Russian and Protestant German occupying forces. "On a day-to-day basis, Catholic practices (making the sign of the cross, honoring religious holidays, attending Sunday mass) allowed peasants to distinguish themselves from their Protestant, Orthodox, Uniate, and Jewish neighbors" (Porter, 2001). Catholicism had become a way for the Polish people to preserve their culture, language and tradition and this would prove to endure on in later generations.

Another factor affecting the history of Catholicism in Poland had to do with World War II. In the present day Poland is almost an exclusively Catholic Country with 89.8% (Central Intelligence Agency, 2008) of the population registered as Roman Catholic but Poland has not always been a homogeneously Catholic Country, in fact in the 1500's it was known for its religious tolerance especially in regard to the Jews WWII would radically alter the religious landscape of Poland, creating "a nearly homogeneous nation by the

murder and expulsion of Polish Jews during and after WWII, and by the ethnic migrations involved in Stalin's movement of Poland's borders to the West" (Byrnes, 1996 pg 1) World War II would also serve to further strengthen Poland's national perception of the church, because the Nazi wrath had not only been directed towards Polish Jews but also toward members of the Polish Catholic Church, which had resisted the Nazis. "Catholic bishops and priests were murdered in large numbers during the German occupation, and survivors like Stefan Wyszyński, chaplain to the Polish underground and future Primate of Poland, came to associate their church with armed resistance to Nazi rule, and with the widespread Polish nationalism the occupation reignited." (Byrnes, 1996 pg 1)

At the end of the war Poland was left an overwhelmingly Catholic nation with a strong identity in the Catholic Church, it was also now officially in the Soviet Union's "Sphere of Influence". The reemergence of a Polish State onto the map of Europe should have been met with enthusiasm by the Polish people; however this was significantly dampened by the sense of foreboding that accompanied any plan that would put them under the authority of the Soviet Union. The past experiences with the Russians left the Polish people apprehensive about a future with the Soviet Union. Also the actions of the Soviet Union in WWII gave cause for concern: "the behavior of Soviet troops clearly indicated Stalin's intention to purge the future Polish state of all independent and genuinely Polish social forces. After the Germans were pushed back, thousands of Home Army soldiers, who had aided Soviet and allied troops in liberating Polish territories, were either shot or sent to concentration camps in Siberia--some of them after having spent years in German camps." (Starski, 1982 pg 7). The result of the Soviet Union's actions during WWII left Poland both unable to resist

Communism or to provide a viable alternative to it because was a Poland that lacked the social mechanisms for active resistance.

After World War II, once again Poland found itself ruled by a foreign power, and this time it was one that was Atheist and hostile to the Church.

### **3.1.b History of Slovakia**

Though the nation of Slovakia has been in existence, arguably for centuries, the country of Slovakia is a rather recent development. The past of the Slovak nation has been even more unstable than that of Poland. Slovakia had spent most of its existence primarily as part of some larger entity. Despite this, the history of interaction between the Church of Rome and the Slovaks can be dated even farther back in time than that of Poland by almost a century. The first recorded state structure on the territory known today as Slovakia was Great Moravia, which consisted of both the Czech lands of Moravia and of Slovakia. Christianity came to this land when Prince Rastislav I, the ruler of the state, sent a letter to the Byzantine emperor with a request for him to send a bishop and some teachers to Great Moravia to teach the Slavic people Christianity in their own tongue. The result was the emperor sent his brothers Cyril and Methodius to Great Moravia to preach Christianity. Cyril and Methodius did more than merely preach. They were also responsible for the first Slavic alphabet, the first Slavic academy and establishing the first archdiocese among Slavic nations. Another special undertaking accomplished by these brothers was establishing the Slavon language as a liturgical language. This is important as it meant that Slavs could retain some part of their cultural identity and become Christian.

Greater Moravia, however, did not survive long and from the tenth century the Slovak and Czech historical experience differed greatly. "The Slovaks were incorporated into the Kingdom of Hungary and remained there for more than a thousand years until 1918. The Czechs kept their independence until their defeat at the hands of the Austrians at the battle of White Mountain in 1620, and thereafter defined themselves in relation to their new German-speaking Austrian overlords. The Slovaks, meanwhile, struggled to keep their identity under Magyar rule. At the heart of the 'Slovak question' in the present century has been the gap between the economically and culturally developed Czech lands and the less developed Slovakia." (Mason, 1998 pg 1) Slovaks, under The Kingdom of Hungary, were not greatly repressed but were subjected to Hungary's ethnic cleansing campaign that has come to be referred to as "Magyarisation".

It was not until after the First World War in 1918 when Slovakia was united with Moravia and Bohemia to form the country of Czechoslovakia. Though the Czechs and Slovaks were related and shared some common history and similar language their relations with the Catholic Church were very different. While Slovaks remained practicing Catholics and found identity in their Catholic religion the Czechs had a distinct anti-clerical tradition.

As an independent entity Slovakia did not even exist as more than a territory of another entity until 1938 when it briefly existed as the Independent Slovak Republic, though that designation was more of a Nazi ploy than a legitimate political existence. Perhaps the most obvious comingling between Church and State in Slovakia occurred in 1938, when Msgr. Jozef Tiso, a Roman Catholic priest, became the first president of the independent Slovak Republic. He was reputed to be allied with the Nazis and was allegedly very anti-

Semitic. The reaction of the hierarchy was for Pope Pius XI to send him a personal blessing (Allen, 1999). The exact political alignment of Msgr. Tiso is unclear. Many say that he took the Nazi offer to try and keep Slovakia from being carved up and distributed to its neighbors. Others say he was a collaborator with the Nazis or worse a Nazi sympathizer. The story is still unclear as to why Tiso took the office. Whatever the exact political alignment of President Tiso the circumstances that he was in were very unusual for a member of the clergy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and would not be repeated until the election of Rev. Jean-Bertrand Aristide to the presidency of Haiti.

It can be said that in many ways the role of the Catholic Church in Slovakia was very much like the role of the Catholic Church in Poland. It was viewed as a protective institution for Slovak culture and nationality against ruling and invasive forces. Except for the brief time in which Slovakia was independent and ruled by the Josef Tiso and the rather current situation after the peaceful division of Czechoslovakia, Slovakia was not an independent entity. Collectively, this leaves Slovaks with a very short time period of independent rule. The rest of the time Slovaks either lived under Hungarian rule or existed as the less prosperous younger brother of the Czech side of Czechoslovakia. Hence the Church became an institution to which many Slovaks ran as a protector of Slovak nationality and identity. (Mason, 1998)

In 1948 Czechoslovakia became a Communist country. This tradition of finding refuge in the Catholic Church continued. Almost immediately upon coming to power the Communists set about not only to undermine the institution of the Catholic Church but to completely wipe it from Czechoslovak society. The role of the Church in the State in other parts of Eastern Europe took a slightly

different form. Many of the other areas that were under Communism did not have the same reaction that Poland did. The Czechs, now predominantly atheist and agnostic, had a tumultuous relationship with the Catholic Church for centuries and were slightly more welcoming to the concept of atheism than Poles. The Slovaks however remained one of the most Catholic regions of Eastern Europe and were quite resistant to Communist Atheism.

### **3.2 Social and Political Situation in Eastern Europe**

The role of the Church in the State in other parts of Eastern Europe took a slightly different form. Many of the other areas that were under communism did not have the same reaction that Poland did. The Czechs, now famously atheist and agnostic, had a tumultuous relationship with the Catholic Church for centuries and the switch from forced Catholicism to Atheism was more welcomed however the Czechs were joined to a very Catholic country for many years as Czechoslovakia and in the Slovak part of the Country the history of the Catholic Church and the Slovaks was different. Slovakia was the country that had perhaps the second most politically active Church in Eastern Europe after Poland.

The political circumstance in which the Church started to play a major role in politics and social policy was the situation of Soviet Communism in the "Eastern Bloc" countries. Under Soviet communism the Catholic Church was repressed and the state pushed atheism on the occupied population. This repression was not applied evenly throughout the Eastern Bloc, however, and there were differences between what happened in Slovakia (Czechoslovakia) and in Poland. Poland with its large Catholic population and strong Catholic identity did not embrace atheist philosophy and managed to force more concessions to the Catholic Church from the State, other populations were more accepting of



atheism such as the Czech half of Czechoslovakia, however the Slovak half remained much more religious and predominantly Catholic.

In the cases where national identity was linked to Catholicism, the Church managed to carve out a little more bargaining power than in other countries and consequently in these countries the Catholic Church and her members played a part in politics, most notably in resistance to the oppressive government. Of course the most notable and famed example would be that of Poland and the Catholic Church's support of the Polish Solidarity Movement through both KOR and also mediating between the government and Solidarity. However the Church in Slovakia was a different story. Though the Catholic Church was a very important institution in the Slovak part of Czechoslovakia it did not share as large a role in the Czech part. This meant that in reality the institution had at best only half of the importance in the country of Czechoslovakia as the Polish Church did. If Slovakia had been an independent country perhaps this would have been different. Furthermore the country itself is much smaller. Czechoslovakia as a whole is still only about half of the population of Poland, which makes it much easier to control than the behemoth of the Polish Catholic Church. Also the division of the Slovak Church would prove especially easy since the Slovak Church actually consisted of the Greek Catholic Church and the Roman Catholic Church which the Communist regime would divide by forcing the Greek Catholics to join with the Orthodox Church.

### **3.2.a The Socio-Political Situation in Poland**

Poland under Soviet Communism was an oppressed society. The communist party in Poland had a monopoly on all political power. During the Stalinist era political opponents and virtually



anyone who was considered a threat were either sent to jail or worse sent to Siberia. Almost all important social institutions had been taken over by the state; Poland was unique among Communist countries in that the Catholic Church retained its independence from the State.

After this the death of Stalin and the placement of Władysław Gomułka as First Secretary in 1956 there was a temporary liberalization of Poland. It was hoped that with Gomułka in power in Poland that Poland could become a more socialist country and the intelligentsia in Poland were hoping that by pressuring the regime that Communism in Poland could be "revised" into a state that was both friendlier to Polish tradition and more in tune with "real" socialist ideals. (Ost, 1990) Poland had been suffering under Soviet Communism and civil unrest had dotted the political landscape for years with the efforts of protestors aimed at trying to bring about this "revisionism". However, by 1968 with the events of the Prague Spring a shadow of doubt about whether the Communist government could be revised into a system more in sync with actual socialist ideals.

The solid turning point came in December 1970: When workers in coastal cities went on strike to protest the massive increase in the prices of basic foodstuffs and to demand increased political freedom catastrophe ensued. The first day of the strike in Gdansk and Szczecin workers marched downtown, where police fired on them, the workers reacted by burning down Party headquarters. However the worst incident happened on December 17<sup>th</sup> when striking shipyard workers, responding to the appeal of the mayor, tried to return to their workplace. Upon their arrival they found gates locked and police then began to fire upon the crowd killing dozens of workers who were just trying to report to work. Needless to say

Gomulka was ousted shortly after this incident. Another significant development came from the striking workers in Gdansk and Szczecin the idea of forming independent trade unions. (Szajkowski, 1983)

June 1976 saw another rise in prices that sparked another round of strikes, the organization called KOR, (Committee for Workers' Defense) Komitet Obrony Robotników, was formed by intellectuals to provide legal and moral support for the workers. KOR was the most important of the organizations that worked in what was known as "the flying university" organizing lectures and other activities vital to building opposition. KOR sponsored the Free Trade Union Committee in 1978 and would later become the main supporter of Solidarity. KOR rejected the titles of being a political group. In August 1980 another monumental event in Polish history occurred, in the Gdansk and Szczecin shipyard workers walked out on strike due to a worsening economy and rising prices. In days, the Strike became generalized and the workers demanded the government recognize their right to form independent trade unions. The striking workers met with success on August 30 when an agreement was signed on August 30 in Szczecin and the 31<sup>st</sup> in Gdansk. (Szajkowski, 1983)

An agreement was signed in Szczecin on August 30 and in Gdańsk one day later, marking the first time a Leninist party state had recognized the right of groups within civil society to organize in defense of their own particular interests. Thus the Solidarity movement was born in the Lenin Shipyards of Gdansk in September 1980 led by Lech Walesa.

On December 13<sup>th</sup> 1981 General Jaruzelski declared Martial Law in Poland making Solidarity and all other pro-democracy organizations illegal. Even universities were closed. For the first four months of

martial law telephone lines were cut. When they were reconnected they were openly monitored and a caller would be greeted with a recording informing them that the line was being monitored. The publication of newspapers and magazine were suspended, letters and telegrams were censored and special permission from the secret police was required to leave one's city. Solidarity was outlawed and could no longer exist as a legitimate trade union, but the movement did not die. Instead it transformed in a loosely organized underground movement. No longer was Solidarity a simple trade union. It had become an icon. (Szajkowski, 1983).

During this time the Church served an especially important purpose. When all other places and institutions had been restricted or outright banned the Church served as an island of freedom. Martial law had outlawed almost all places that people could organize, except the Church. "Talks, lectures, and workers' universities are all organized by the Church. Solidarity "cannot have a meeting of ten people in a private apartment because 50 per cent will be arrested the same day. But in a church, we can have three, four, or five thousand people coming to a lecture on the philosophy of law, or the national economy." (Luntz, 1985) Church served as the organization in which Solidarity and the resistance to the government could live.

In July 1983 Martial law was lifted and Solidarity was now technically legal, however it was not the simple trade union that it had started out to be. It had evolved into a nation-wide political movement. On February 6 1989 the Polish roundtable talks commenced. The Catholic Church had become involved with the talks and Bishop Alojzy Orszulik co-organized the talks. The Church also sent a few priests to participate in the talks and to act as observers representing the Church. In April of that year

Solidarity was legalized again and was allowed to field candidates in any of the upcoming elections.

### **3.2.b Socio-Political Situation in Slovakia**

The situation of Slovakia during Soviet Communism was very similar to that of Poland. The new communist Government in Czechoslovakia was even more oppressive than it was in Poland. However, Czechoslovakia was a much smaller country than Poland and Slovakia made up only half of it. Naturally the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia was much smaller also. I am going to focus on only Slovakia because Slovaks, like Poles, tend to share a common link between Catholic identity and their nationality and culture and also because Slovakia has experienced political movements involving the Church similar to Poland in the twentieth century.

Slovakia was not as lucky as her Polish neighbor in that the Slovak Church most certainly suffered greater repression under Communism. Since the Church did not occupy the same revered and vital social position as the Polish Church and because there are many fewer Slovaks than Poles, the Church was much more easily repressed. Almost immediately at the start of Communism in 1950, the persecution of the Catholic Church in Slovakia began.

The Communist regime took many measures to disable the Catholic Church and neutralize its influence. One of the first actions that was taken was to round up priests and other religious officials and take them to "concentration monasteries". The Communist government also attempted to cut the ties to the Vatican that the Czechoslovak church had by expelling the papal nuncio.(Korec, 2002)

Another action that was taken by the Communist government was to force the Byzantine Catholics of Eastern Slovakia to merge with the Orthodox Church.

During this time Priests were labeled as employees of the state and as such had to have a license from the state to practice. If they did not obtain a license then they were accused of practicing illegally and could be arrested and sent to jail. Similarly, seminarians needed official state approval to be able to attend seminary. As a result, many priests and religious officials had to find employment doing manual, unskilled labor as factory workers or similar jobs if they could find any. However, priesthood is forever and those priests who did not cooperate and agree to pander to the Communists demands either stopped practicing or went underground.

In 1968 there was a thaw in the restrictions and the Slovak and Czech people could enjoy some restored liberties. The church also was allowed to enjoy a small restoration of some liberties. "In 1968, the Slovak Ministry of Culture allowed restoration of the Greek Catholic Church. That same year, the Communist Party also allowed nuns to return to Slovakia (they were evicted mostly to Czech lands in the early 1950s and worked as unskilled laborers on agricultural farms). They were allowed to teach religion at schools, to work in hospitals and centers for disabled people." (Kusa, 1998) The thaw was to be short-lived though, as on August 21, 1968 the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact Allies invaded Czechoslovakia after failed negotiations in order to prevent Dubček from implementing any more reforms.

March 25, 1988 was the first step toward real protest. It was on this day that the first anticommunist demonstration known as "the Candle demonstration" was staged in Bratislava. There about

2000 peaceful Catholic protesters organized by the Slovak Catholic Church demanded religious freedom and were dispersed by the police quite violently. (Záborská, 2008) This was the prequel to the November 1989 Student demonstrations in Prague and the Velvet Revolution. eventual fall of Communism in Czechoslovakia in 1991

### **3:3 The Church's role and reaction in the situation**

### **3.4 Grassroots mobilization through the Church**

#### **3.4.a Poland**

The Catholic Church in Poland had many ways that is supported Solidarity and opposed the Communist government however the Polish clergy never actually became so directly involved in politics that it was ever part of the government or of the trade union Solidarity officially. However it is very safe to say that the Catholic Church was most defiantly politically involved in the opposition movement.

Another factor adding to the importance of the Catholic Church in Poland was the fact that it was the only institution that the Communist party had almost no influence over.

The election of Karol Wojtyła to the papacy was one of the symbols of hope to Poland. The Pope's visit to his native country in 1979 was just as political as it was spiritual. The papal nuncio had been expelled from Slovakia in the communist government's attempt to cut off the Slovakian Catholic Church from the Vatican. However the Communist government of Poland could not very well refuse Pope John Paul's 1979 visit to Poland, after all he was Polish.

Another event that further solidified the Church's special position with the Solidarity movement was the death of Father Jerzy

Popieluszko. Like Solidarity the Catholic Church and its clergy had become more than just an institution it had become a symbol and one of the strongest symbols was Father Popieluszko. Father Popieluszko was a pro-solidarity priest that openly criticized the communist regime. Furthermore he was also the Spiritual advisor to the legendary Lech Walesa. In October 1984 Popieluszko went missing two weeks later his dead body was found floating in the Vistula River with evidence on the body that he had suffered severe beatings and it was clear that he had been murdered.

Popieluszko's funeral was attended by thousands and had become a rallying point for Solidarity supporters. At this funeral there were floral arrangements in the shape of an "S" for Solidarity and the service was conducted with an open coffin so that those who attended could see the mutilation of the body. The Communist government's attempt to silence a pro-solidarity priest had ended up making him a national martyr and his murder became a symbol to many poles of everything that was corrupt and evil about the Communist government in Poland.

The 1983 Code of Canon Law that was put in place by John Paul II expressly forbid members of the Catholic Clergy from having an active part in political parties or in governing trade unions. However on February 1989 members of the Catholic Church were involved in both of these as they took part in the round table talks in Warsaw. In fact Bishop Alojzy Orszulik Co-Organized and participated in the round table talks as an observer from the catholic Church further more he was a Canon lawyer and also a lecturer on the subject of Canon Law at Catholic University in Lublin.

They are not to have an active part in political parties and in governing labor unions unless, in the judgment of competent ecclesiastical authority, the protection of the rights of the Church or the promotion of the common good requires it.

The involvement of the Church was not just under the table in Poland also it was official, on February 6, 1989 with the commencement of the Round Table talks in which the Catholic Church participated and mediated.

### **3.4.b Slovakia**

Unlike Poland the Church of Slovakia was not able to become nearly as involved in Revolution as the Church of Poland. The Catholics of Slovakia were not as able to support resistance to the Communist government as the Polish Catholics, probably because they lacked in number and percentage in Czechoslovakia, but they still managed to have some small impact. The resistance to the government came through actions such as pilgrimages, on various saint days in which the Slovak people demonstrated faith in God. "On July 5, 1985, some 150,000 to 200,000 Catholic pilgrims came to Velehrad to mark the 1,100th anniversary of the death of St. Methodius." (Kusa, 1998) This is not the kind of direct political involvement that we have seen in the other cases that we are studying but none-the-less it had a similar impact as that of the funeral of the Polish Priest Jerzy Popieluszko in motivating the people.

There are hardly any scholarly texts documenting the resistance movements of the Catholic Church in Slovakia against the Communist government however it is known that during the Velvet Revolution the Church was the vehicle through which opposition to the government occurred. "In the Czech Lands, where



Normalization was at its most severe, the dissident group Charter 77 was created, in protest to the strict regime. Meanwhile, dissent in Slovakia mainly took place through the Catholic Church.” (Heart of Europe: the Velvet Revolution, 2002)

An example of this would be the event which has come to be known as “the Candle Demonstration” which took place in Bratislava on March 25, 1988. This event was considered to be the first anti-Communist demonstration in what lead to the Velvet Revolution. An unauthorized, peaceful demonstration of about 2,000 Slovak Catholics gathered demanding religious freedom and civic rights. Though the demonstrators were non-violent the police used brutal tactics, such as water cannons and truncheons, to disperse them. (Záborská, 2008)

Though Slovakia did not have many demonstrations, the few that they did have, like the Candle Demonstration, were effective. It served as a precursor to the Velvet Revolution demonstrations

Take note that the weakness of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia as a whole was the main reason that the Church could not accomplish the same degree of involvement and success as the Poles. It is possible that if Slovakia were not linked to the Czech lands at this point in time that the Church would have been more capable of achieving a greater degree of resistance as it would have been representative of the majority population in just Slovakia, where as it represented less than half in the Czech and Slovak lands combined.

### **3.5 Reaction and Official Stance of the Hierarchy Towards Actions in Eastern Europe**

The Holy See’s reaction to the situation in the eastern Bloc countries was a rather personal one. During the years in which

Solidarity was thriving in Poland it enjoyed the support of the hierarchy and the Vatican. Perhaps this was because the Polish Primate from 1948-1981 was Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński who happened to be an expert in Catholic Social Doctrine.

Perhaps the most notable circumstance however was the election of Karol Wojtyła to the papacy in 1978 as John Paul II. John Paul II being a native Pole and as the bishop of Krakow and later as Cardinal had dealt directly with the communist regime. Perhaps this influence and the years spent living under and dealing with the communist regime in Poland was why he was so adamantly opposed to communism and anything that resembled it. This could also be one of the reasons that the official reaction of the Vatican towards the Solidarity movement was a positive one and also why there was no criticism from the Vatican during the round table talks in which the Church was directly involved in not only high Politics but also a very powerful labor union

In his 1991 encyclical *Centesimus Annus* Pope John Paul made special mention of the collapse of communism, in a sense putting a stamp of approval on the methods that were employed by Solidarity as well as its goals. "Among the many factors involved in the fall of oppressive regimes, some deserve special mention. Certainly, the decisive factor which gave rise to the changes was the violation of the rights of workers. It cannot be forgotten that the fundamental crisis of systems claiming to express the rule and indeed the dictatorship of the working class began with the great upheavals which took place in Poland in the name of solidarity. It was the throngs of working people which foreswore the ideology which presumed to speak in their name. On the basis of a hard, lived experience of work and of oppression, it was they who recovered and, in a sense, rediscovered the content and principles

of the Church's social doctrine. " (John Paul II, 1991). The fall of Communism in Poland, (Czecho)-Slovakia and the rest of the Eastern Bloc stood to John Paul II as a prime example of how social revolution should be achieved: through tolerance, peaceful demonstrations and negotiation.

Pope John Paul II had nothing but supportive words and praise for the peaceful tactics used by the people in the Eastern Bloc to bring down the Communist governments, "Also worthy of emphasis is the fact that the fall of this kind of "bloc" or empire was accomplished almost everywhere by means of peaceful protest, using only the weapons of truth and justice. While Marxism held that only by exacerbating social conflicts was it possible to resolve them through violent confrontation, the protests which led to the collapse of Marxism tenaciously insisted on trying every avenue of negotiation, dialogue, and witness to the truth, appealing to the conscience of the adversary and seeking to reawaken in him a sense of shared human dignity." (John Paul II, 1991)

It is very difficult to locate any criticism or rebuking towards the members of the Catholic Church, both clergy and laity, in Slovakia and Poland. This lack of criticism and lack of incidents of suspension as was the case for certain priests involved in revolution in Latin America meant that the Vatican was supportive of the involvement and action of the Eastern European Churches and looked upon the involvement in the resistance to the Communist government not only the correct action of the churches in this region but also the way that they were involved was the correct way to do it.

#### **4.0 The Case in Latin America**

#### **4.1 Brief History/background of the interaction of Church and State**

In Latin America the Church had a different role in forming states than it did in Europe, the Church was an ever present entity from the very beginning of the creation of states, when the first Europeans set foot in Latin America often times among them was a Roman Catholic Priest among them. The Spanish and Portuguese had colonized the area and as regions under these ruling powers the Church enjoyed state support from the ruling monarchies of Spain and Portugal. As the official religion the Catholic Church enjoyed many benefits, one of them was that they were the only religion allowed the two were merged. "In this era no distinction existed between Church and state, religious and secular; the two swords cooperated to bring new wealth and souls under claim." (Bruneau, Power and Influence: Analysis of the Church in Latin America and the Case of Brazil, 1973) The Catholic Church had a monopoly on salvation that was protected by the monarchy. In return the Church supported and endorsed the monarchy. This however is only half of the story and is greatly oversimplified.

It is true that without state support the Catholic Church would not have the power in Latin America that it has today. However, from the very beginning the Church and the State experienced conflicts because the Church and state had separate goals; the Church's goal was conversion of the natives to Catholicism while the conquistadors and colonists main goal was the procurement of wealth. "In order to achieve the fundamental objective of converting the native population to Christianity, Catholic missionaries needed to win their trust. Often this meant defending them against ill treatment by the secular colonizers, an activity that frequently generated conflict with the colonial government." (Gill A. , 1998).

This statement we will find to be particularly true in colonial Brazil where the Jesuits enjoyed special missionary status and protected natives.<sup>7</sup> The situation is further complicated by the fact that the protected status of the Church was secured by the government.

These opposing goals would linger throughout Latin America's history and as the countries of Latin America became independent of the colonizing powers the role of the Church changed, having different positions in different countries. "The Catholic Church has had a varied role throughout South America, in some cases national episcopacies were in official opposition to authoritarian regimes, other episcopacies have supported them others have been in support of them through their silence" (Gill A. J., 1994). Some episcopates supported regimes, such as Paraguay and Bolivia while others opposed it such as Nicaragua. But the roles were ever-changing to suit the times. An example would be how the Church supported the Somoza dynasty in its early years but then was condemned as dynasty was succeeded to the Somoza children whose corruption became obvious and vast and whose lost popularity declining rapidly. Then as opposition grew to the Nicaraguan Catholic Church became one of the episcopacies that stood on the forefront of the progressive Catholic movement which opposed dictatorships.

Governments may have changed throughout the years from colonial government to military regime and democracy but the state of the Catholics in Latin America did not improve much over the centuries and many of native peasants, of the 16<sup>th</sup> century were still living in poverty in the twentieth century. "By the middle of the twentieth century more than half of the world's Catholics were living

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<sup>7</sup> This theme will later resurface in the mid-twentieth century with the Development of Liberation theology.

in underdeveloped countries in conditions of crushing poverty and spiritual decay.” (Sabia, 1997 pg 13) Many of these Catholics that lived in poverty were Latin American and their conditions and the conditions of their Church were significant in that both of these factors played a large role in the development of social justice movements in the area.

Now let's review a brief individual history of each of the selected countries, Brazil and Nicaragua and the role which the Catholic Church played in them.

#### **4.1.a History of Nicaragua**

From the very beginning of its recorded existence in the 1500's the church has been an ever-present force in Nicaragua often with Catholic priests arriving at nearly the same time in what is now Nicaragua as the Spanish conquistadors. Nicaragua became a Spanish colony whose first system of governance was the feudal-type *encomienda*, in which *Encomenderos* acted as feudal lords over the indigenous Indians in the area. However the Spanish crown wanted to reform this system in favor of more capitalist goals. Almost immediately there was conflict and division between members of the Church and the ruling powers. “In this political struggle, the high-ranking clergy was divided between those who took sides with the *encomenderos*, closing their eyes to the social ills of the system and the inhumane treatment of the indigenous population.....and those who voiced their opposition to the existing structure and took sides with the kings for abolition of the *encomienda* system” (Foroohar, 1989 pg 2) Some priests and bishops sided with the Spanish monarchy and others sided with the *Encomenderos*, this was partly because some of the priests were themselves *Encomenderos*, who had been granted large amounts of land in exchange for subordinating themselves to the

government and opposing the government could result in them losing their land. This was among the first of many times throughout history that clergy in Nicaragua would have to choose sides between two political forces. Even as early as 1533 there have been priests like Bartolome de las Casas, who have been supportive of the rights of indigenous peoples in Latin America condemning the brutality of the conquistadors and colonizers.

The movement for independence in the early 1800's again changed the dynamic between the Church and the government. Once again some priests took the side of the monarchy while others took the side of the independence movement. Those that took the side of the monarchy were mostly clergy of high rank, such as bishops. The bishop in Leon was particularly active as the rebellion grew stronger. "Bishop García Jerez, a Spanish monarchist, had to agree to the demands of the rebels. Astutely, he proposed an election in each barrio to choose deputies in order to form a junta to deal with the new situation." (Foroohar, 1989 pg 3) This was a very wise political move, as the deputies that were elected by the crowds were mostly priests who were under his authority as bishop and thus he was chosen to be the head of the junta. The rebellion still spread though and in other cities much the same division with the bishops and vicars siding with the monarchy as the lower level priests remained part of the movement.

For the next couple years after Nicaragua became independent of Spain the status of the Church in the state was inconsistent. For the brief time Nicaragua existed as part of the United Provinces of Central America<sup>8</sup> Catholicism was declared the official religion and forbade any other religions from public practice. However this arrangement changed when President Francisco

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<sup>8</sup> This entity consisted of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador

Marazon, took office in 1830 and then pushed laws through the legislature that severely crippled the Catholic Church's status by abolishing some of the monastery orders and then declaring the property of the eliminated monasteries to belong to the state. During this time "the traditional hegemony of Catholicism suffered all over Central America, but proved strong enough to survive the difficult times." (Foroohar, 1989 pg 5)

Nicaragua gained complete autonomy in 1838, when its own liberal democracy and Catholicism was instituted as the official religion and regained protected status however other religions were no longer forbidden as they were in the past. However this did not last very long as by 1893 General Jose Santos Zelaya had seized power and established a dictatorship. Zelaya was a Liberal and under him the structure of the Nicaraguan economy was modernized and several other progressive reforms were implemented. Among these reforms was the expansion and improvement of the school system, agricultural reforms and the advancement of the country's infrastructure such as railway and roads. He also reformed the relationship between Church and State "The new Liberal government was committed to destroying the traditional hegemony of the Church, and it attempted to use liberalism as an ideological tool." (Foroohar, 1989 pg 10) A new constitution was implemented and in it the 1862 Concordat was declared null and the separation between Church and State was emphasized. It also secularized many of the institutions that were traditionally Catholic: cemeteries, marriages and schools. After Zelaya further harassed the Catholic Church by sending several priests and nuns into exile he was excommunicated by Bishop Pereira y Castellon. Zelaya sent this Bishop into exile in response. (Foroohar, 1989)



Also notable was the implementation of land reform by President Zelaya "one of the results of the Liberal reforms in Nicaragua was an accelerated rate of land expropriation in indigenous villages, and its redistribution among private landowners. In 1906, the government abolished title to all communal lands, and villages were ordered to divide the land among their members and outside purchasers" (Foroohar, 1989 pg 29). Many of the land reforms were designed to further an economy based on coffee production.

In 1909 the United States sent military forces to intervene in president Zelaya's military dictatorship. The United States got involved because of disputes over a proposed construction of a Pan-Isthmian canal, as well as for the intentions of stabilizing the regions and gaining access to Nicaragua's natural resources. The American Military ousted Zelaya and then remained occupying the country until 1933. One of the main reasons that America pulled out of Nicaragua was due to a guerilla movement that arose in the late 1920's in protest of the United States military occupation of Nicaragua. This movement was led by Augusto Cesar Sandino. Sandino and his forces engaged the US military, mostly marines, in very costly and frustrating guerilla warfare until 1933 following the election of a new President: Juan Bautista Sacasa. The newly created Nicaraguan National Guard, led by the U.S.-backed Anastasio Somoza Garcia, was to take over where the American Military left off. Sandino pledged his allegiance to the new president but this was not to last and in little more than a year General Somoza and the Nicaraguan National guard had overthrown President Sacasa and executed Sandino. During this time the Church had remained silent choosing to have little involvement in politics, some scholars such as Foroohar, speculate that it was because the Church knew that Nicaragua faced domination by

North America and that it preferred the American Conservatives to liberals in power.

In 1936 when Anastasio Somoza Garcia came to the presidency in Nicaragua, he marked the beginning of a family dynasty that would rule Nicaragua through the late seventies. Throughout his "presidency" Somoza had the political and economic support of the United States; he was after all the result of the US's involvement in Central and South America who had helped to put him in charge of the National Guard and eventually into the presidency. He retained this support until his assassination in 1956.<sup>9</sup> During this time the Nicaraguan Church encouraged compliance and support of the people with the Somoza government, even though it was quite oppressive.

In the beginning of the Somoza regime the Archbishop at the time, Jose Antonio Lezcano y Ortega viewed Somoza as a protector of the Catholic Church in Nicaragua from Protestant influence and from international Communism, the two threats which he thought loomed paramount against Nicaraguan Catholicism. He made it very clear, especially to the Somoza political leaders, that he was opposed to the nationalist guerillas of Augusto Cesar Sandino, he even went so far as to encourage Sandino's followers (the Sandinistas) to submit and support the regime. His successor Archbishop Vicente Alejandro Gonzalez y Robledo sustained this relationship with the regime until Somoza Garcia's death. (Gill A. , 1998)

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<sup>9</sup> Somoza Garcia was not technically the president during the whole 20 years, he was president in 1937-1944 and then again from 1950-1956. In between he used the National Guard to place first Leonardo Arguello into the presidency and then after seeing Arguello's autonomy and intention to reduce the power of the guard he promptly had a coup staged placing Benjamin Lacayo into the Presidency. Make no mistake though; Somoza Garcia was in power through the whole time.

After Somoza Garcia's assassination his sons Luis and Anastasio Somoza Debayle took over control of the government. However they were not as politically savvy as their father, by ending the populist approach of their late father they alienated the Nicaraguan elites. After Luis's death in 1967 the family business fell into even further decline after a rally of the Conservative Party ended with a massacre of 300 people. The Somoza Dynasty's fate was sealed though after Anastasio Somoza Debayle funneled money meant for disaster relief of the 1972 Managua Earthquake into his pockets and allowed the National Guard steal the incoming aid supplies. The Somozas were losing support not only from the Nicaraguan people but also the support of the Nicaraguan Church.

#### **4.1.b History of Brazil**

Brazil's history started much like Nicaragua's history with its colonization in the 1500's by the Portuguese. Like Nicaragua the Catholic Church played a significant role in the social and political structure of the country from this colonial beginning thanks to the fact that the colonizing country, Portugal, was a Catholic country whose monarchy both supported and was supported by the Catholic Church.

Perhaps the tie between Brazil and the Catholic Church is even stronger in Brazil because of the unusually close ties between the Church and the Portuguese Crown. A relatively new religious order, the Society of Jesus<sup>10</sup> otherwise known as the Jesuits, somehow convinced the Portuguese monarchy to put Brazil under their care. In 1549 an expedition containing six Jesuit priests was sent to establish a government in Brazil. The Jesuits and the monarchy worked together to create a central government in Brazil

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<sup>10</sup> The Society of Jesus was approved by Pope Paul III in 1540.

and set up a missionary church whose primary goal was to civilize the indigenous peoples and convert them to Catholicism. The Jesuits began about their mission by establishing European-style villages to which they brought the indigenous peoples. However they had tempered success with this as the natives preferred their own lifestyle to that of the tightly controlled Jesuit villages.

The original plan for Brazil's economy had been to exploit the natural resources and raw materials that Brazil could provide, in particular Brazil wood which was much in demand for its necessity in making a very popular red dye for the European textile industry. However there were two barriers to this plan the first was that the indigenous population was too stubborn and too sparse to make lucrative slave labor and the second reason was because of the Jesuit missionaries protected the indigenous population from enslavement. Because there was no gold and the indigenous population was protected and sparse the costs of establishing a colony in Brazil were unusually high, so Portugal relied on private investors to establish the colony. These investors were noblemen and in return for taking care of the whole cost of development the monarchy bestowed them with far-reaching powers and privileges as well as titles. Sugar plantations by were established by these noblemen and African slaves were imported into the colony to perform the needed manual labor.

Like Nicaragua, as time went by the colony of Brazil had to be defended against other competing colonial empires colonial empires particularly the French and the Dutch. France in particular had an interesting effect on Brazil because of the Napoleonic wars.

The Napoleonic wars may have been far away in Europe but they had a very direct effect upon Brazil. When Portugal was invaded by France in 1807 the Portuguese monarchy and

government packed up and fled to Brazil, Portugal's most important colony. They put the instruments of modern government in their new location of Rio de Janeiro, and for a few years the Empire of Portugal was run entirely from this outside location in Brazil. The monarchy remained in Brazil until 1821 when the king and most of his family returned to their homeland. However his son Dom Pedro stayed behind in Brazil to act as regent.

A year later Dom Pedro, supported by Britain, declared Brazil to be an empire and proclaimed himself as its emperor: Pedro I. The Brazilian empire existed for another six and a half decades until it was overthrown and a federal government was put in its place. At this time the government was controlled fundamentally by the coffee industry; Brazil produced over half of the world's coffee by the turn of the century.

In 1930 there was a revolution in Brazil and Getulio Vargas was installed as the "provisionary president" by the Brazilian military. Vargas was in fact a president in name only and in reality he ruled Brazil as a dictator. Seven years after his installation he had dissolved the Parliament and banned all political parties and trade unions. The press was censored and he suppressed all opposition. Despite this the Catholic Church during the Vargas era was actually quite empowered.

Because Vargas and the Church were both anti-communism and in favor of increased conservatism the two cooperated. Aside from having certain values in common the Church and Vargas benefitted each others' relationship. "The Church took advantage of political change and promoted publicity campaigns and pressure group tactics to show that it was indeed a political force to be reckoned with." (Bruneau, *Power and Influence: Analysis of the Church in Latin America and the Case of Brazil*,

1973,pg 40).The Church's promotion of Vargas as politically legitimate earned them special privileges from the government. The Constitution was promulgated in God's name, religious education was added to public schools, and the Church was the benefactor of state funding for a multitude of different activities. (Bruneau, Power and Influence: Analysis of the Church in Latin America and the Case of Brazil, 1973)

Vargas held on to power until 1945 when he was ousted in a military coup. However he was re-elected as president six years later. Vargas managed to retain his presidency until another military coup in 1954 which ended with the resignation of President Vargas to his Vice President João Café Filho which was followed by Vargas's immediate suicide.

In October 1955 Juscelino Kubitschek was elected president, and Brazil experienced a great increase in economic growth and change started to permeate the country. With the Kubitschek's government came limited democracy and the Brazilian government "talked and sometimes acted to change society, peasants were mobilized and an aura of change permeated the country" (Bruneau, Power and Influence: Analysis of the Church in Latin America and the Case of Brazil, 1973 pg. 40)

With 1960 came Janio Quadros's reign as president was ill fated and he resigned after only a few months. Quadros's vice president, the left-wing Joao Goulart, succeeds him but after four years is overthrown by the military. The military coup of 1964 ushered in an era of military rule that would last for two decades and the Church would have a strange relationship with it.

## **4.2 The Social/Political Situation in Latin America**

Socio-political situation in question for our two countries is this: Brazil had just entered into an era of military rule and Nicaragua was beginning to feel the tremors of revolution as the Somoza dynasty began to crumble.

Both countries had oppressive governments but perhaps the precipitating issue in Latin America was the issue of poverty and challenging the status quo. As we can see from the preceding histories of Nicaragua and Brazil, both countries started out as colonies whose sole purpose was to make the colonizing country richer thereby making the indigenous poorer by default. Remnants of the colonial system set up the countries in Latin America for inequality in land ownership. In the twentieth century the unequal pattern of growth and investment widened that gap between rich and poor and the authoritarian governments perpetuated this kind of growth.

Adding to the Church's growing awareness of poverty was the rise of Protestantism in Latin America and the decrease in priests and ministers of the Catholic faith. The Church was beginning to realize that it needed to have more appeal to its core constituency in Latin America, the poor, or face losing them to a Church that fights for their social justice.

#### **4.2.a Nicaragua**

The situation during the time frame of our analysis that we enter into in Nicaragua is one where the Somoza regime is losing power and revolutionary forces are gaining ground. Nicaragua in the 1960's saw a great increase in economic growth due to the creation of the Central American Common Market which expanded the market for Nicaraguan goods. However this growth was lopsided at best making the rich richer and widening the gap

between rich and poor. "However, since the benefits of the economic expansion were distributed on an extremely unequal basis among the population, the upper class, the main beneficiary of the economic growth, developed a pattern of high consumption, very similar to that of more privileged countries." (Forroohar, 1989 pg, 31) Not only was the profit of economic growth going to the rich there proved to be yet another problem with it, it was simply not enough to employ the poor of Nicaragua and they remained unable to better their position, "the Nicaraguan industrial system, which developed in the framework of the Central American Common Market, proved to be incapable of absorbing the large number of dispossessed peasants immigrating to the cities in search of jobs." (Forroohar, 1989. pg 35) In short the problem of poverty among the lower classes and the growing corruption set the stage for class struggle and revolution.

At the same time that the problem of poverty and corruption was occurring in Nicaragua, The Sandinista Liberation Front (FSLN) , which had been founded in 1961 on the principles of Sandino three decades earlier, was being developed and was growing. This leftist movement was in opposition to the corrupt Somoza government and held Marxist ideology .The FSLN was planning on using the tactics of prolonged popular war to eventually gain victory. They slowly amassed peasants from the countryside to fight this war, they were growing in popularity slowly but the turning point came during the aftermath of the 1972 Managua earthquake.

By the time Anastasio Somoza Debyale succeeded his brother as president the regime was starting to tremble and by the time of the Earthquake in 1972 the dynasty was fully crumbling, losing all the support that it had amassed even the support of the Church which had once backed it staunchly. The actions of



Anastasio Somoza in pocketing relief money and allowing the National Guard to loot the aftermath and steal aid supplies and the corruption and uneven distribution of aid supplies had lost him and the government the support of his constituency and of the Catholic Church who was now harshly criticizing him. Somoza had even lost the support of the USA who had helped to put his father in power. (Foroohar, 1989)

The turning point came in 1978 with the assassination of Pedro Joaquin Chamorro. This event prompted a strike that united the FSLN and the moderates under a common goal of getting rid of Somoza. By 1979 The FSLN successfully overthrew Somoza in and established junta that aligned itself with the Soviet Union and Castro. The Nicaraguan FSLN government had created a very odd relationship to the church because so many of the clergy had become members of the party and fought in the opposition movement. As a result after the Sandinista government was in power several priests, like Ernesto Cardenal, who had participated in the movement were given government ministerial positions.

In 1985 Daniel Ortega, the leader of the Sandinista party, was elected president staying in office until 1990. He was defeated in 1990 by Violeta Barrios de Chamorro and the FSLN party lost the popular majority in 1991.

#### **4.2.b Brazil**

The situation in Brazil was very much like the situation that we come into in 1964 Brazil is one where the former President Goulart has just been ousted in a military coup and Brazil was under a new military dictatorship with army chief of staff, Marshal Humberto Castelo Branco temporarily at the helm. When Castelo Branco took office as the first leader of the regime he dismantled

the left wing of the Congress and abolished all the existing political parties and replaced them with two new parties: The National Renewal Alliance Party (ARENA) and the "Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB).

The new military regime was quite conservative, suspicious of Communism, Marxism and of the left in general. It had made an effort to side with the Catholic Church because of this seeking the support of a fellow conservative institution, but it was in for a shock because sections of the Church had changed. "A syndrome emerges when the military confronts a slightly changed Church: Marxist principles have invaded the Church" (Bruneau, *The Political Transformation of the Brazilian Catholic Church*, 1974) The government sought the support of the Church because the institution had been traditionally conservative nonetheless there were still clashes between Church and State, this was because the Church was not entirely conservative as the military leaders would have liked. The Military government "did anticipate the Church's assistance in governing the country, but it seems that even this institution has been invaded by enemies and must be purged. On the one hand, they defend its importance and align themselves with its traditions; and on the other they attack it, imprison priests and persecute even bishops." (Bruneau, *The Political Transformation of the Brazilian Catholic Church*, 1974) The members of the CNBB as well as the more conservative parts of the Church were cautious in expressing disapproval of the regime and were just hoping that order would be restored and that the economic crisis would be managed.

Improving the economy was in fact a primary goal for the military government of Brazil and it instituted many new policies to support growth many of them concentrated in developing

infrastructure. "These policies included industrial development in the southeastern core of the country; integration of the entire national territory, including Amazonia, through new transportation and other infrastructure projects; and the country's increasing visibility in the international arena." (Godfrey, 1999) The government put many plans in motion trying to bring about a complete economic turnaround.

These policies were successful and the government achieved its goal of economic growth, the gross national product grew and inflation fell, the state of the economy was improving quickly. However, the wealth was not spread evenly. "All studies have shown however, that this fantastic growth has not benefited the lower classes, and it is presumably because of this that it has been rapid. The lower classes have been forced to pay the costs of rapid growth and as there are no channels of protest, but only repression, they have no alternative." (Bruneau, *The Political Transformation of the Brazilian Catholic Church*, 1974) pg 179 ) As was the case in Nicaragua, the growth of the economy only benefited a few and served to widen the gap between rich and poor.

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The year 1968 marked the start of widespread student protests in opposition to the government in Brazil. From that year on the opposition in Brazil would grow, supported by the left wing Church. This mounting opposition to the government would persist into the 70's and 80's as Brazil's economic Crisis worsened.

In 1979 João Figueiredo assumed the presidency and vowed that he would begin opening the government and make Brazil into a democracy. During his presidency he faced growing economic troubles with inflation skyrocketing and enormous foreign debt. All of this coupled with the growing civil unrest eventually lead to the end of the Military regime in Brazil.

Finally in 1985 the election of Tancredo Neves marked the end of 21 years of military oppression, unfortunately he dies before he can be put into office and his vice president Jose Sarney succeeds him as president. Sarney attempts to remedy the economic crisis by freezing both prices and wages hoping this slow the rapid inflation, but the plan backfires as soon as price freeze is lifted inflation rises dramatically. A new constitution is put in place in 1988 and presidential powers are lessened. In 1989 when Fernando Collor de Mello became president he introduced new economic reforms but there was little improvement of the situation. (Godfrey, 1999)

#### **4.3 The Church's role in the Situation**

#### **4.4 Grassroots mobilization through the church**

The situation of poverty and social inequality in Latin America lead to the formation of a new theological movement 1960's. "Much of this change can be traced to the institutional

liberalization of Vatican Council II and the regional conferences that translated these reforms into a "preferential option for the poor" (Gill A. J., 1994) This movement was known as liberation theology, which was the basis for the involvement of the Church in social movements that the Church in grassroots level would become involved in.

The Catholic Church in Latin America faced a serious problem in the twentieth century: a shortage of priests. "Latin America has the world's largest population of Catholics but it suffers from a constant shortage of priests. The region with the most Catholics is also the region least able to locally attract new clergy to the priesthood. (Gill A. J., 1994) The Church in Latin America had this problem for decades but in 20<sup>th</sup> century it became a contributing factor to the involvement of clergy in revolutionary movements. The priest shortage was an incapacitating problem for the Church because of the vital and central role of priests in Catholicism. For centuries it was possible for the Church to survive with this priest shortage because it had a state protected monopoly on religion for centuries. However this changed and competition came in from protestant churches which focused more on helping the local level and focused on improving living conditions for the local people. With the rate of poverty and injustice climbing former Catholics were going to the new evangelical missionaries because they offered more community involvement, tried to improve living conditions and also because the evangelical churches were open and had ministers. Since the Catholic Mass is entirely dependent on the presence of a priest, if there is no priest there is any Mass, where as with the evangelicals these specialized clergy were not required for worship. Seeing these mounting problems that the Church and the people faced in South America the episcopacy

Some, like Anthony Gill of the University of California Los Angeles theorize that the liberalization of the Church, that is the growing movement of liberation Theology, is the result of an increasing supply of Protestants, Spiritists and Marxists in Latin America. In Gill's opinion the episcopacies and the parishes' demands for social justice and involvement in politics is a supply-side reaction to the increase of Marxists, Spiritists and Protestants in the area. In other words the Catholic Church evolved to become more competitive. "In the face of rapidly encroaching competition, it is reasonable to expect the Catholic Church to initiate programs aimed at retaining nominal parishioners" (Gill A. J., 1994) In short Gill claims that the Catholic church in Latin America mutated as a response to increased competition using Liberation Theology to become more competitive and attract the poor. Accordingly the grassroots Church would also become involved in the political and revolutionary movements which the poor supported and which appeared to benefit them such as the Sandinista Liberation Front in Nicaragua.

There were events and organizations that prompted this liberal development of the Church one of the most important institutions in the Latin America Church was, and still is, the Latin American Bishops Conference or (Latin American Episcopal Conference) (CELAM) which was created in 1955.

Following the release of the documents of Vatican II in 1965 the Latin American Episcopal Conference convened in Medellin, Columbia in 1968 to discuss exactly how they were going to apply the new mandates that were laid out for them in the new documents. The results of this Conference were the Medellin documents. In these documents the bishops of Latin America first recognized the state of Latin America: that there is a lot of suffering,

misery and injustice. Many people do not have the opportunity for education and those who are highly educated often leave for more developed countries and the peasants and Indians often have a poor quality of life and live in poverty and exploitation. They also recognized that due to the social and economic structure of many of the countries of Latin America that the continent is highly reliant on international business enterprises and furthermore that this structure have contributed to political instability in many of the countries. They also point to the lack of solidarity in Latin America that is characterized by the unjust structures that are in place. After recognizing the injustice and poverty are so widespread in Latin America the Bishops then write about what actions should be taken to remedy these social ills. It is a realization that something needs to be done and the documents of Vatican II provided motivation to create organizations that would address and repair the situation.

The document places a great deal of emphasis on the need to build community on many different levels to remedy the situation of poverty and injustice. It supports and encourages trade and labor unions. The Church recognized the need to create organizations that support the poor peasants and Indians and engage the communities more deeply with each other.

One of the solutions that the Latin Catholic Church devised and encouraged in the Medellin Conference was the concept of Christian base Communities (Comunidades Eclesiales de Base) or CEB's. The CEB's were inspired by the protestant model of ministry through community involvement. These base communities were loosely organized groups of Catholic Christians ranging from 15 to about 40 people in a group, most often with a lay leader but sometimes a religious leader, these groups are centered around the groups common interests, this can be bible study or improving

crops, CEB's include a wide variety of different topics. The groups The CEBs were designed to helped stretch the ministry of the already stretched thin priesthood in South America through lay ministry and give a preferential option for the poor. The CEBs were a way to build community to maximize the utility of the poor.

#### **4.4.a Brazil**

Brazil is unique in that it has been one of the most forward thinking Churches in the world. "The Brazilian Catholic Church has epitomized the new "progressive stance of Catholicism in Latin America." (Gill A. J., 1994). The Catholic Church in Brazil has been on the cutting edge of progress, and it has produced some of the most prominent and influential liberation theologians and liberal institution. Brazil's fostering of the Liberation Theology movement, Christian Base communities meant that the Brazilian Catholic Church was on the forefront of progressive movement and also the front of the populist movement. It is even thought that Christian Base communities were first developed in Brazil.

One of the institutions that was formed in Brazil was a very influential organization called the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops<sup>11</sup> (CNBB). Founded in 1952 by Monsignor Helder Camera, the CNBB precedes both Vatican II and CELAM, and was promoted and directed by twelve of the younger Brazilian Bishops (Bruneau, Power and Influence: Analysis of the Church in Latin America and the Case of Brazil, 1973).

The CNBB was a revolutionary organization in that the Second Vatican Council Bishop's Conferences had very limited power and operated in a limited and conservative context. Yet the CNBB managed to develop a whole new model to work by getting

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<sup>11</sup> Conferência Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil



much more involved in the community than traditional Bishops' Councils. This small sector of the Church was changing the way the Church had functioned and was rapidly evolving, it supported social change projects like the MEB (Movimento de Educação de Base) which dealt with basic education (Bruneau, *The Political Transformation of the Brazilian Catholic Church*, 1974 pg.79). Another unusual thing that the CNBB did was to establish relationships with the left-leaning progressives. This was very unusual at the time as historically the episcopate had always been linked to the right, conservative side.

This new model of influence and new collection accordingly came with a new line of thinking. "The new model of influence centered on the principle that the Brazilian masses had to become human before they could expect to become Christians." (Bruneau, *Power and Influence: Analysis of the Church in Latin America and the Case of Brazil*, 1973,pg 41). This organization was linked to the populist movement and Liberation Theology and it was on the forefront of Catholic movement for social change. It was a cruel irony for the CNBB that same time the documents of the Second Vatican Council were being promulgated and released that their country was slipping backward under a conservative military regime. The regime was looking to the Church for support but they were not looking at the progressive branch. "The Church that the military elites have in mind is that traditional one which baptized them, educated them, married them, spoke for morality and against Communism, and in general supported the status quo." (Bruneau, *The Political Transformation of the Brazilian Catholic Church*, 1974, pg 40) The Documents of Vatican II would have provided support to the CNBB in a Catholic climate of conservatism instead they were all but drowned in a government climate of conservatism.

It was unfortunate for the CNBB that the new military government was very anti-Communist and anti-Marxist. As anyone who displayed left-leaning tendencies or were perceived as Marxist sympathizers were persecuted. "Immediately following the coup there were persecutions and laymen who had been involved in social change programs." (Bruneau, *The Political Transformation of the Brazilian Catholic Church*, 1974, pg.181) During this time the actions of the CCNB were suppressed and the actions of this organization were all but halted and the organization existed basically in name only.

Meanwhile the more conservative section of the Church grew less supportive of the regime upon the realization that the regime was only maintaining order by suppressing dissent. After this realization even the section of the Church that had once been mildly supportive felt to need to criticize the government. When the Brazilian Church finally did voice its criticisms and concerns the military reacted violently in a series of clashes between the Church and state. Brazil's church as a result began changing into a Church with a majority of leftists. It was not because of the government's brutality toward the Church that the Bishops and clergy became to oppose the government and be a resistance force it was also the inhumanity to the poor and oppressed that motivated them.

In the 1970's the Northern Brazilian Bishops began to openly criticize the government. They" that opened the first volley in the Church-State war by issuing a series of documents on poverty and human rights violations in the early 1970s. "Impoverishment Of A People," a public endorsement of socialism, marked a milestone in the history of the Latin American Church as the first time a group of influential bishops had taken such a radical stand." (Lernoux, 1977) This was not to be an isolated incident, the Brazilian Church

continued to be the voice of resistance to the government and as a result the members of the Church themselves were targeted.

“Protest has cost the Church dearly, with over 100 religious imprisoned, expelled or murdered, threats and physical violence against bishops and the censorship or closure of Church media, including newspapers and radio stations.” (Lernoux, 1977)

It was around this point in time that Brazil’s Church, which had started off as a right wing leaning organization, had become one of the most left leaning churches. Not only producing Liberation Theologians, but also boasting bishops that were in support of Liberation Theology and had a part in government resistance.

When the military regime ended in 1985 Brazil’s government might have changed, but the church did not. It remained a very aligned with the left and with the ideology of Liberation theology. While the Brazilians were proud their church is so progressive the Vatican took a different stand upon it. The Vatican took particular exception to the liberalness of Brazil’s Church and in an effort to rein it in “imposed travel and speaking restrictions on two prominent advocates of liberation theology in Brazil: the Rev. Leonardo Boff, a Franciscan theologian in Petropolis, and Bishop Pedro Casaldaliga of Sao Felix do Araguaia.” (Brooke, 1989) It also reassigned several Bishops in an attempt to dilute their authority and power and undermine the culture and concepts of Liberal Liberation Theology.

#### **4.4.b Nicaragua**

There is no disputing that Nicaragua is much smaller than Brazil in both land mass and population, accordingly the church is much smaller than Brazil’s also. “There may be Bishops in Brazil than there are priests in Nicaragua.” (Dodson, 1984) Yet the size

of the Church has not affected the size of its political involvement, in this respect the Nicaraguan church is quite comparable to the Church of Brazil.

In the beginning of the Somoza regime the Archbishop at the time, Jose Antonio Lezcano y Ortega viewed Somoza as a protector of the Catholic Church in Nicaragua from Protestant influence and from international Communism, the two threats which he thought loomed paramount against Nicaraguan Catholicism. He made it very clear, especially to the Somoza political leaders, that he was opposed to the nationalist guerillas of Augusto Cesar Sandino, he even went so far as to encourage Sandino's followers (the Sandinistas) to submit and support the regime. His successor Archbishop Vicente Alejandro Gonzalez y Robledo sustained this relationship with the regime until Somoza Garcia's death. (Gill A. , 1998)

After Somoza Garcia's assassination his sons Luis and Anastasio Somoza Debayle took over control of the government. However they were not as politically savvy as their father, by ending the populist approach of their late father they alienated the Nicaraguan elites. After Luis's death in 1967 the family business fell into even further decline after a rally of the Conservative Party ended with a massacre of 300 people. The Somoza Dynasty's fate was sealed though after Anastasio Somoza Debayle funneled money meant for disaster relief of the 1972 Managua Earthquake into his pockets and allowed the National Guard steal the incoming aid supplies. The Church even released a

While the Somoza regime grew weaker and weaker by corruption the Sandinista movement grew stronger. Appealing to the poor and peasant class the movement grew in momentum, at this time the bishops of Nicaragua were put into a difficult position,

neither option for government was ideal to them: the Somozas were a corrupt and authoritarian power and the Sandinistas, though promising reform and an option for the poor had disturbing Marxist tendencies. Regardless of this a significant portion of clergy came to support the Sandinistas seeing them as bringing a hope for the peasantry and the poor. "The development of the FSLN from an isolated small guerrilla group operating in the mountains of northern Nicaragua to a major popular force by the end of the Somoza regime, governing the large cities, was accompanied by the evolution of a major sector of Nicaraguan Catholics from a politically ultraconservative, religiously superstitious, and fatalist group to a combative opposition force" (Foroohar, 1989 pg 111) A small percentage of priests and nuns went even further becoming very deeply involved in with the Sandinistas going beyond regular political support such as political demonstrations or simple expressions of support and became active participants in the guerilla movement. The Bishops of the area never condoned this and issued warnings to those involved.

Perhaps the most famous example of the involvement of clergy in the Sandinista movement was case of Fr. Ernesto Cardenal. Later when the Pope John Paul II visited Nicaragua in 1983 the world saw the Vatican's disapproval with Cardenal's involvement with the Sandinista government. After the Pope's plane touched down he was greeted on the tarmac by several officials and clergy who came forward to kiss the pope's ring. However, when Cardenal came forward to kiss the Papal ring, the pope immediately recoiled his hand and began to publicly scold the priest right there on the tarmac, shaking his finger and reportedly saying to Cardenal that he needed to resolve his issues with the Vatican authorities. (Sabia, 1997)

#### **4.5 Reaction and official stance of the hierarchy**

There were many ways that the Vatican responded to the growing involvement of priests and religious in the politics in Latin America. In contrast to the situation in Poland and Slovakia almost all of these reactions were directed at "reigning in" rogue clergy and concepts to keep them from becoming what it perceived as too radicalized and far from Church Doctrine. The prevailing pontiff for much of this turbulent time, John Paul II, had many ways which were employed in an attempt to restrict the Church's political role in Latin America and to bring them in line with the official policies of the Church. These ways were Social Encyclicals and letters, the reissuing of Canon Law, reorganizing bishops and rebuking or suspension of clerics who have become too involved in political matters.

##### **4.5.a Social encyclicals and letters**

The situation that was precipitating in Latin America prompted letters both internally within the Vatican and also those that were made available to the general public. The most pointed response to the question of Liberation Theology that the Vatican issued was the 1984 **"Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation"**, preceding this was an internal document penned by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger written with the intention of informing and advising the Vatican in general on aspects of Liberation theology, it is simply titled "Liberation Theology". At the time it was written Ratzinger was one of the most influential men in the Roman Curia, as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which was the body of the Vatican that authored this instruction.

In Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger's preceding letter he expresses his misgivings about the phenomenon known as "Liberation Theology". He acknowledged the Theology of liberation encompassed a whole school of thought and takes many forms ranging from what could fundamentally be described as radical Marxism to a theology of social responsibility and care for the poor and oppressed. It was those theories that fell into the latter variety that were of major concern for the Cardinal. In this advisory letter Cardinal Ratzinger warned about the Marxist nature of this form of theology stating: "The very radicality of liberation theology means that its seriousness is often underestimated, since it does not fit into any of the accepted categories of heresy; its fundamental concern cannot be detected by the existing range of standard questions." (Ratzinger) Marxism is not a standard form of heresy that the Church was used to dealing with because strictly speaking Marxism isn't exactly heresy because it was developed completely outside of religious thought however now that it was being applied in some form to Liberation Theology it had to be dealt with by the Church as heresy.

The main problems that Cardinal Ratzinger found with the Marxist leanings of Liberation Theology are in regard to the tenet of class struggle. Ratzinger found a couple of conflicts in the concept of class struggle and some main philosophies of the Catholic Church. It is one thing to empower the poor or to try and improve their condition but it is an entirely different matter to side with them and engage in a class struggle AGAINST the rich. The view of the church is that there simply should not be a class struggle and, that the rich and the poor should work together.

The other problem with the philosophy of class struggle and the Catholic Church is that the Church is a hierarchy so if the

Church did promote a class struggle, and then a class struggle did ensure it could result in either overthrowing the church (it is a hierarchy after all which is in direct opposition to Marxist principles) or it could end up in the division of the Church between rich and poor which could end in factionalization of the Church. Even in a best case scenario where the Church has chosen the winning side it could still end up compromising the entire structure of the church or at the very least alienating a substantial amount of people from the Church.

Following this document was the Vatican's official response to the development of liberation theology in the Latin America called "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation" in 1984. In it the church treads very lightly careful to not discourage those who feel that they have a special calling to care for the poor and try to better their situation. In the instruction on Liberation theology the church tread lightly indeed, being very careful not to discourage those who feel a need to give preferential service to the poor while also reminding it's audience that the Catholic Church should be more concerned about liberating souls from sin and damnation than "liberation from servitude of an earthly and temporal kind" as the instruction put it.

The Document discusses Christian duty and salvation and was meant as an instruction to the Church in Latin America. Not surprisingly it echoed Ratzinger's recommendation letter. The main condemnation of Liberation Theology though comes halfway into the document.

The primary objection to Liberation Theology is found in the the "Marxist Analysis" in which the church harkens back to the *Rerum Novarum*. Here the Church reminds its audience of certain principles of Marxism that are in contradiction to Catholic Dogma



such as atheism and class struggle. "Let us recall the fact that atheism and the denial of the human person, his liberty and rights, are at the core of the Marxist theory. This theory, then, contains errors which directly threaten the truths of the faith regarding the eternal destiny of individual persons." ( Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, 1984) Even though most Liberation Theologians are not atheist they were reminded of the atheist roots of Marxism. Readers were also reminded that "The fundamental law of history, which is the law of class struggle, implies that society is founded on violence. To the violence which constitutes the relationship of the domination of the rich over the poor, there corresponds the counter-violence of the revolution, by means of which this domination will be reversed." ( Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, 1984) This was another point that was important since one of the main concepts of Christianity, not just Catholicism, was non-violence, peace.

In this document the Church was careful to not discourage the work that many were doing to aid the poor and wanted to be clear about its objections to certain aspects of Liberation Theology. "This warning should in no way be interpreted as a disavowal of all those who want to respond generously and with an authentic evangelical spirit to the "preferential option for the poor."( Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, 1984)

#### **4.5.b Canon Law**

As was mentioned earlier in this paper, Pope John Paul II issued an updated version of the Code of Canon Law in 1983. While the earlier version started by Pope Pius X and finished by Benedict XV in 1917 did include restrictions and immunities for priests from participating in any offices not fitting to a priest, including, forms of forced or voluntary military service and from civil

office this was gotten around quite easily and was not worded nearly as strongly and clearly as the new version. (Bouscarin, T. Lincoln and Adam C. Ellis, 146) In this fresh Code the line between politics and priests was clearly and deliberately drawn. Priests were not to hold civil office of public power or to participate in labor union politics anymore. This meant that those priests in Nicaragua, such as Ernesto Cardenal, who had taken posts in the Sandinista government, would have to resign their posts or be found in violation of Canon Law.

#### **4.5.c Installing different bishops**

Another tactic employed by John Paul II was to “stack the deck” in his favor by simply appointing more conservative and conforming bishops in places that were becoming very liberal, this was the case in Brazil. Often these bishops were members of Opus Dei and held views that were completely contrary to their predecessors who had followed in the spirit of Medellin.

#### **4.5.d Suspending and rebuking Clergy**

One of the policies that the church has is to maintain a distance between church and state. This policy was strongly reinforced during the papacy of John Paul II. In 1983 John Paul II issued a new code of Canon Law, in which He encouraged his priests to stay out of politics, perhaps the most memorable example of this was when in 1983 publicly scolded Father Ernesto Cardenal, withdrawing his hand when the priest tried to kiss his ring and supposedly said "You must resolve your problems with the ecclesiastic authorities."<sup>12</sup> This all took place in front of TV cameras on and was broadcast on international television.

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<sup>12</sup> Quote taken from Angelus online. Daily news brief  
<http://www.angelusonline.org/print.php?sid=2686>

A second example of suspension Brazil Leonardo Boff, a prominent Liberation theologian, was censured and suspended as a result of his advocacy of Liberation Theology and his writings on Liberation Theology. From 1970 until 1985 he participated in the editorial council of Editora Vozes. During this time he participated in the coordination and publication of the collection, "Theology and Liberation" and the entire edition of the works of C. G. Jung. In 1984, he was submitted to a process by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, former Holy Office, in the Vatican. This was due to his theses linked to liberation theology exposed in his book *Church: Charism and Power*. In 1985 he was condemned to "obsequious silence" and was removed from his editorial functions and suspended from religious duties. Due to international pressure on the Vatican, the decision was repealed in 1986, allowing him to return to some of his previous activities.

The Vatican has suspended an order of "penitential silence" imposed 11 months ago on a Brazilian theologian. The theologian, Friar Leonardo Boff<sup>13</sup>, had been banned from editing, writing or speaking in public for an unspecified period after charges that he had committed serious doctrinal errors. Friar Boff indicated that he thought the Vatican's action was a gesture of good will toward Brazil's Roman Catholic bishops. He said he had received the news "as an Easter present."

## **5.0 Conclusions**

### **5.1 Church Policy**

The Catholic Church is forced to walk a fine line between being a Christian Church whose main objective is salvation and being a huge multi-national entity that has considerable sway in

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<sup>13</sup> Since then Boff has resigned from the priesthood but still teaches.

many levels of politics. While the Church's main goal is salvation it is impossible for it to have a completely neutral impact upon national and international politics because of its enormous size, historic standing and quantity of members.

This dissertation's goal has been to find out what the Church's policies toward social revolution and political involvement are, what the Church has done to put them into action and if the Church has been consistent in doing so. I believe that from this analysis we can construct a reasonably accurate summary of the Church's policy towards involvement in social and political movements

The first and most important guiding principle that the Church has toward politics, social justice and essentially any other matter is that the Catholic Church's primary function on earth is first and foremost the business of salvation. Salvation is stressed as the main goal of the Church. Temporal and earthly situations involving people will always come second to this fact and the second must never eclipse the first in importance. This has been stated and restated in all of the documents that were consulted in this analysis. While it may seem an obvious statement, the supremacy of this precept is not to be underestimated.

When considering this concept it is also important to consider that Catholicism, as an exclusive religion, believes that it has the fullness of the truth. It cannot promote other churches or philosophies that are in opposition to it, since its entire existence centers on it alone having what it believes to be the fullness of truth. Therefore any threat to losing members or having its members lose salvation through the Catholic Church, is addressed as paramount. Therefore the Church will bargain and make some

exceptions, though not radical ones or ones that violate church dogma, in order to exist and survive. Also this effects how the Church creates strategies. The clear example is in Latin America where the threat of new Protestant and Evangelical missionaries motivated the Church to imitate the community style evangelism of the Protestants and create CEBs.

The policy that the Church has is that clergy are not to hold public office, have an active part in political parties or to govern trade unions. This is the official rule; but in general clergy and religious are discouraged from becoming overly involved in any politics. However, the Vatican recognizes that the Catholic Church cannot exist in a vacuum; the Church has to interact with political entities. So the Church does allow interaction but prefers it to be restricted to interaction with designated church leaders. The higher the position in the hierarchy the more autonomy that officials have in dealing with governments, political movements and states. Bishops, cardinals and nuncios all have considerable interaction with governments. Nuncios, in particular, are political in nature acting as diplomats to other countries from the Vatican. Also, involvement in political parties and holding public office is forbidden. However, if for some reason the Church thinks that a member of the clergy in politics will serve the greater good then a special dispensation can be granted. In short, the 1983 modification to the 1983 code of Canon Law was not so much with the intention of trying to keep priests out of politics as it was for the Church to retain integrity.

It is also evident from all of our case studies that in the twentieth century the Church tries to stay uninvolved. However there are a few reasons and situations that explain why the church does get involved. In the cases we have discussed, the Church has

become involved generally because they are the only institution that is in place that is able to assume the job. In the case of Poland in particular, the Church fostered the Solidarity movement because there was no other institution that was there to do it. Likewise it mediated in the Polish round table talks because there was no other establishment that could do it. The cases in Latin America have a similar stance. The Church was the only stable, powerful institution and as a result it ended up forwarding the cause of social justice.

It is important to note that the rule of non-involvement does not extend to parishioners. Catholic laity is free to engage in political movements and to hold civil office; in fact numerous documents released from the Vatican encourage democracy and the participation in politics for the purpose of furthering the public goods and social justice. From the documents presented, it appears that the church encourages democratic government and community involvement.

With this split stance the legitimate question arises: Why does the church maintain a separation between clergy and laity regarding political involvement? The church maintains this division for two main reasons which are basically integrity and culture. Keeping the clergy out of political movements and out of political office helps maintain the integrity of the Church.

Furthermore the barrier to political participation also serves to protect the culture of Catholicism. Political office requires a lot of time and dedication and for a member of the clergy this is time that is taken away from religious duties and time taken away from the laity that depends on him for religious services. Because the Catholic Church is unique in that it is utterly dependent on ordained priests to perform religious services in a way that protestant

churches are not, it pursues policies that will keep priests in the priesthood and dedicated to their duties. The Holy See wants the clergy and other religious officials who have dedicated their life to God's work do just that, having a political career takes away from this responsibility.

## **5.2 Differences in Latin America and Eastern Europe**

Finally, we will discuss the apparent differences in the Vatican's political policies towards Latin America and Eastern Europe. From the evidence presented, it appears that the reaction of the Vatican to the political involvement of clergy and religious in Latin America was much more restrictive than the policy there that was applied to Eastern Europe. In all cases the actions that the (National) Church pursued were in the interest of furthering the common good and bringing about social justice. It appeared that the Vatican arbitrarily supported political involvement and revolution in one area of the world while condemning the same thing in another part of the world. However, after a review of the situations and the facts we can see that surprisingly this is not true at all. The modern Church has applied its policies quite equally to the two situations and the differences arise not from the Vatican but from the episcopacies and lower level churches in the respective cases.

The situations in Poland and Slovakia were those in which a Communist regime was repressing the populations and also attempting to repress the Church. In Latin America the autocracies were both directly and indirectly oppressing the poor of the population, and the poor made up the majority of the population. The differences though in the situations defined the differences in how the Vatican reacted.

Poland and Slovakia were both struggling against a Communist regime. The Church throughout its history has never supported Communism or Marxism so it was natural that the Church would be supportive towards Poland and Slovakia's struggles. On the other hand some form of Marxism was exactly what the Church of Latin America was trying to bring about. The Church in Latin America was touting Liberation Theology which had some distinct and definite elements of Marxism that the Vatican strongly discouraged, such as social revolution and social justice through class struggle. There was no way in which the Vatican could have supported any kind of revolution movement that had at its center in Marxist ideology, there were too many documents and encyclicals directly condemning the ideology.

Concerning Marxist ideology in the four cases, it is very interesting to note the regarded position of bishops and high ranking clergy in the different movements. While in Poland and Slovakia bishops were considered bourgeoisie or intelligentsia and as such were considered to be enemies of Communism. This is interesting especially when regarding Slovak Jan Cardinal Korec's book "Night of the Barbarians" where he repeatedly points out that though he was a bishop he lived no life of luxury and was from a working class family and yet he was treated as bourgeoisie and jailed. In Nicaragua and Brazil though there did not seem to be this problem with bishops, as some of the founding documents for liberation theology came from the Bishops Councils. This is also considering that the bishops in Nicaragua and Brazil probably did more to help keep Rightist autocracies in place than the bishops of Eastern Europe did.

The second distinction is how the revolutions were handled. The Churches in Poland and Slovakia had supported the resistance



movements, but they were careful to not ever become entangled in politics directly. There were no priests or religious that held public office or headed trade unions or similar positions in the latter half of the twentieth century and the resistance movements were supported mainly through what can be called normal church functions, such as holding Mass, gathering, pilgrimages, praying and also through education. The movement was also very peaceful and the Church, both the episcopate and the lower levels, had strongly discouraged violence of any kind though the government inflicted jailing, punishments, brutality and sometimes even killings upon members of the resistance.

In contrast the government resistance movements in Brazil and Nicaragua were not always peaceful and several priests in Latin America were directly involved in the political movements. When the revolutions succeeded and the new governments were in place a few priests that had been part of the movement even took posts holding public office such as Ernesto Cardenal in Nicaragua. Furthermore, the revolutionary movements in Latin America had often sprung from organizations that were guerilla movements and this too is a violation of the 1983 Code of Canon Law and an action that the Church would not and could not condone.

One of the goals of this paper was to determine if the Vatican had applied the policies that it had laid out in various Church documents evenly in different areas of the world. It is true that the Vatican did react differently to the situations in Eastern Europe and Latin America. However it is not because the Vatican had/has an inconsistent policy or that they applied these policies inconsistently. The difference was in both the goals of the resistance movements and in the manner in which they were

carried out. The policies that the Vatican had laid out for the involvement of the Catholic Church in politics were followed evenly.

It is also notable that Poland and Slovakia had a very traditional Church in comparison to the progressive Church of Brazil and Nicaragua. While the Eastern European Church erred on the side of safety in keeping with the old traditions of the Church, the Latin American Church was developing a whole new, and controversial theology, one that pushed the boundaries and was becoming uncomfortably close to what the Vatican considered heresy.

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